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Message Text

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64
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: POLL RESULTS INDICATE LIBERALS CONTINUE
DOWNSLIDE IN POPULARITY

REF: OTTAWA 3036

1. SUMMARY: GALLUP POLL CONDUCTED IN JULY SHOWS ELECTROAL SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES AT 46 PERCENT COMPARED TO LIBERAL SUPPORT OF 31 PERCENT. FIFTEEN PERCENT SPREAD SIGNALS CONTINUING LIBERAL DOWNSLIDE SINCE LAST POLL IN MAY WHEN SPREAD WAS 12 PERCENT AND REPRESENTS CONTINUATION OF PC LEAD OVER LAST FIVE MONTHS. PCS LEAD IN EVERY REGION EXCEPT QUEBEC WHERE LIBERALS HAVE MAJORITY SUPPORT BUT WITH 46 PERCENT UNDECIDED. FACT THAT RESULTS REGISTER INITIAL REACTION TO AIR TRAFFIC BILINGUALISM DISPUTE AND TAIWAN OLYMPIC HASSLE MAY BE SOME CONSOLATION TO LIBERALS ON THEORY THAT RESULTS COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. ADDED SMALL GROUNDS FOR LIBERAL OPTIMISM IN FACT THAT LIBERAL SUPPORT SEEMS TO HAVE BOTTOMED OUT AND IN INDICATION THAT DISAFFECTION FROM TRUDEAU AND LIBERALS NOT TRANSLATED INTO EQUAL ENTHUSIASM FOR JOE CLARK AND PCS. END SUMMARY.

2. GALLUP POLL RESULTS PUBLISHED AUGUST 4 SHOW 46 PER-
CENT OF ELECTORATE FAVORS PCS WHILE 31 PERCENT FAVORS LIBERALS. NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) IS A DISTANT THIRD WITH 17 PERCENT. THIS 15 POINT SPREAD BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR
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PARTIES REPRESENTS CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF LIBERAL

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SUPPORT AND FIFTH STRAIGHT MONTH IN WHICH OPPOSITION PCS HAVE LED LIBERALS. LAST PARTY PREFERENCE POLL WHICH CONDUCTED IN MAY AND RELEASE IN JUNE HAD ONLY A 12 POINT DIFFERENCE WITH PCS AT 43 PERCENT AND LIBERALS AT 31 PERCENT.

3. POLL WAS CONDUCTED IN MID-JULY AND, THEREFORE, REPRESENTS AT LEAST INITIAL PUBLIC REACTION BOTH TO BILINGUAL AIR CONTROL DISPUTE AND TO GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF TAIWAN PARTICIPATION IN OLYMPICS.

4. GALLUP POLL DID NOT PROVIDE REGIONAL BREAKDOWN OF PARTYPOPULARITY BUT MERELY STATES THAT PCS ARE AHEAD OF THE LIBERALS IN EVERY SECTION OF CANADA EXCEPT QUEBEC. IN QUEBEC, LIBERALS STILL ENJOY "MAJORITY SUPPORT" AMONG DECIDED VOTERS BUT UNDECIDED FACTOR IS "VERY HIGH" AT 46 PERCENT.

5. COMMENT: PCS HAVE LED IN POLL RESULTS SINCE JOE CLARK WON THE FEDERAL CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP IN FEBRUARY. LIBERAL POPULARITY HAS BEEN ON CONTINUING DOWNCURVE SINCE MARCH WHEN PC LEAD WAS ONLY 9 PERCENTAGE POINTS. COMMENTATORS HERE ARE IN GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT BONUS EFFECT OF CLARK'S HONEYMOON PERIOD IN NEW LEADER-SHIP POSITION NO LONGER PERTAINS AND THAT LIBERAL GOVERN-MENT HAS EARNED BAD POLLING MARKS ENTIRELY ON ITS OWN. DESPITE GENERALLY BLEAK PICTURE THIS POLL PRESENTS TO LIBERALS, HOWEVER. THERE ARE SOME SMALL GROUNDS FOR LIBERAL OPTIMISM. POLL TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE AIR TRAFFIC BILINGUALISM DISPUTE AND THE OLYMPIC TAIWAN HASSLE IN BOTH OF WHICH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT FIGURED VERY PROMINENTLY. LIBERAL LOYALISTS CAN EXPRESS SATISFACTION THAT NO GREATER DAMAGE DONE. THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE, MOREOVER, THAT LIBERAL POLLING FORTUNES HAVE NOW BOTTOMED OUT. TOM AXWORTHY, SPECIAL ASSISTANT IN PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, POINTED OUT TO EMBOFF THAT, EVEN IN DARKEST DAYS OF LESTER PEARSON GOVERNMENT, LIBERAL SUPPORT DID NOT DIP BELOW PRESENT FIGURE. AXWORTHY ASSERTED THAT 31 PERCENT FIGURE REPRESENTS LIBERAL DIEHARDS AND THAT BEDROCK NOW REACHED. FINALLY, HIGH UNDECIDED PERCENTAGE (ROUGHLY ONE IN THREE VOTERS) SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT VOTER DIS-
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AFFECTION WITH TRUDEAU AND LIBERALS HAS NOT BEENTRANS-LATED INTO COMMENSURATE ENTHUSIASM FOR CLARK AND THE PCS. THIS LEAD TO LIBERAL HOPE THAT DISAFFECTED CAN BE WON BACK. HOW, OF COURSE, IS THE QUESTION.
ENDERS

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